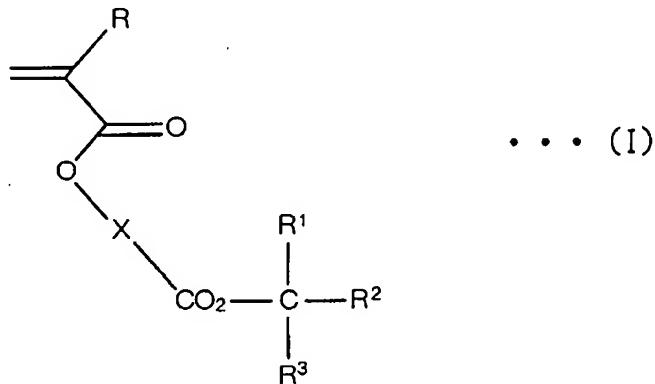


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claim 15 as follows.

1 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern comprising: a resist pattern formation step, in which a positive resist composition comprising a resin component (A) that displays increased alkali solubility under action of acid, and an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure is applied to a substrate, a prebake is conducted, said resist composition is selectively exposed, post exposure baking (PEB) is conducted, and alkali developing is used to form a resist pattern; and a narrowing step in which a pattern size of said resist pattern is narrowed by heat treatment, wherein

said component (A) utilizes a resin with a structural unit (a1) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester represented by a general formula (I) shown below:



wherein, R represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl group; X represents a hydrocarbon group with 1 to 4 rings; R¹ to R³ either each represent, independently, a lower alkyl group, or alternatively, one of R¹ to R³ represents a lower alkyl group, and two remaining groups represent lower alkylene groups, terminals of which are bonded together to form a single ring containing 5 or 6 carbon atoms including bonded terminal carbon atoms.

2 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 1, wherein said component (A) utilizes a resin with a structural unit (a1) in which said groups R¹ to R³ each represent, independently, a lower alkyl group.

3 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 2, wherein said component (A) utilizes a resin with a structural unit (a1) in which said lower alkyl groups are either methyl groups or ethyl groups.

4 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 1, wherein said component (A) utilizes a resin further comprising a structural unit (a2) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester with a lactone unit.

5 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 1, wherein said component (B) utilizes an onium salt with a fluorinated alkylsulfonate ion as an anion.

6 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 1, wherein said positive resist composition further comprises a secondary or a tertiary lower aliphatic amine.

7 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 1, wherein said narrowing step is a thermal flow process in which said resist pattern is heated and softened, and a pattern size of said resist pattern is narrowed.

8 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 7, wherein said positive resist composition further comprises a compound with at least two vinyl ether groups, which reacts with said resin component (A) on heating and forms cross linking.

9 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 1, wherein said narrowing step is a shrink process, in which a water soluble resin coating comprising a water soluble polymer is provided on top of said resist pattern, and subsequently heated, causing said water soluble resin coating to shrink, thereby narrowing a spacing of said resist pattern.

10 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 9, wherein said water soluble polymer utilizes a polymer comprising a structural unit derived from at least one monomer which acts as a proton donor, and a structural unit derived from at least one monomer which acts as a proton acceptor.

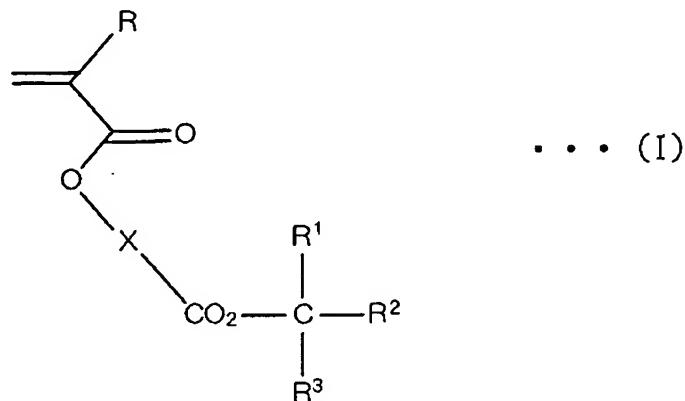
11 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 10, wherein said water soluble polymer is at least one polymer selected from a group consisting of acrylic based polymers, vinyl based polymers, cellulose based derivatives, alkylene glycol based polymers, urea based polymers, melamine based polymers, epoxy based polymers, and amide based polymers.

12 (original): A method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 9, wherein said water soluble resin coating further comprises a water soluble amine and/or a surfactant.

13 (original): A positive resist composition for use within a method of forming a resist pattern according to claim 1, comprising a resin component (A) that displays increased alkali

solubility under action of acid, and an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, wherein

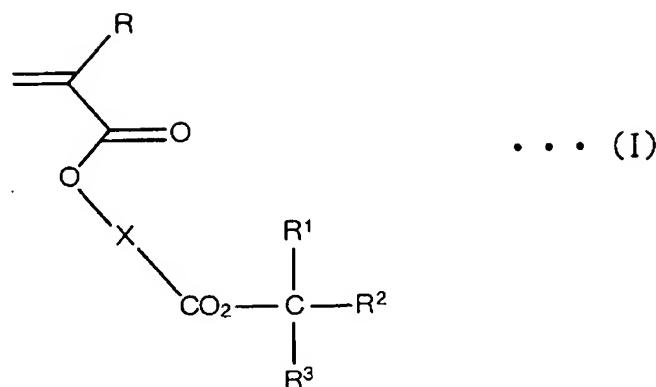
said component (A) is a resin with a structural unit (a1) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester represented by a general formula (I) shown below:



wherein, R represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl group; X represents a hydrocarbon group with 1 to 4 rings; R¹ to R³ either each represent, independently, a lower alkyl group, or alternatively, one of R¹ to R³ represents a lower alkyl group, and two remaining groups represent lower alkylene groups, terminals of which are bonded together to form a single ring containing 5 or 6 carbon atoms including bonded terminal carbon atoms.

14 (original): A layered product in which a resist layer formed from a positive resist composition according to claim 13, and a water soluble resin coating comprising a water soluble polymer on the resist layer are layered onto a substrate.

15 (currently amended): A positive resist composition comprising a resin component (A) capable of displaying increased alkali solubility under action of acid, and an acid generator component (B) capable of generating acid on exposure, wherein the resin component (A) is ~~constituted by~~contains a resin having a structural unit (a1) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester of general formula (I):



wherein, R represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl group; X represents a hydrocarbon group with 1 to 4 rings; R¹ to R³ either each represent, independently, a lower alkyl group, or alternatively, one of R¹ to R³ represents a lower alkyl group, and two remaining groups represent lower alkylene groups, terminals of which are bonded together to form a single ring containing 5 or 6 carbon atoms including bonded terminal carbon atoms.

16 (previously presented): A method of forming a resist pattern comprising:
applying the positive resist composition of Claim 15 to a substrate;
conducting pre-baking of the substrate with the positive resist composition;
selectively exposing the resist composition;
conducting post exposure baking of the substrate with the selectively exposed resist composition; and
forming by alkali developing a resist pattern using the post exposure baked resist composition; and
narrowing a pattern size of the resist pattern by heat treatment.